Thoughts on Education Articles

January 25th, 2010

**“L.A. Names new school chief”**

This article just goes to show how politics, money, and the feudal system rule out democracy when it comes to children’s education in the future. The business approach to school that has been heavily popularized in the past few years is slowly taking over the leadership of a governmental institution that seeks the best education for its students. A longtime former educator is a definite plus in having someone that truly understands the role of a teacher and its importance in the system. A former official of the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation can be a minus being around the “run schools like a corporation” mindset of the capitalistic corporate juggernaut that is Bill Gates and his affiliates. The appointment of Mr. Deasy just seems like a dynastical approach to what should be an open ended transparent appointment to one of the most important education positions in the country, Los Angeles being the 2nd largest school district with numerous problems. The teachers union brings up valid points such as having a public forum and national search which just make plain sense.

The push for teacher ratings/evaluations and linking student achievement is a controversial one which I battle with in my own mind. It makes sense on one hand, if the teacher is putting in the extra work, extra hours, extra preparation, is being trained regularly, applying best practices, and is getting constructive criticism, student achievement should then increase. In a perfect world this might be true, but in my opinion there are too many variables to make this an across the board statement that works for every district in every situation, and I believe works the least in large urban school districts like L.A.. Districting, student vouchers, students applying all over the city, magnet schools, neighborhood schools, charter schools; socioeconomic issues scream at the forefront of rough neighborhoods and rough schools that even with the best of faculty and staff would still achieve a lot lower then suburban rich neighborhoods, therefore not attracting but scaring away any quality educator that would like to see an increase in pay due to student achievement.

**“Without aid, DPS may close half of its schools”**

DPS like many large urban school districts across the country have to deal with huge deficits and I have not yet seen any real great solutions to this problem. Some of the topics the article touches on, such as class increases from 35-62 at the high school just seem absolutely absurd. School officials stating they wanted a “lecture hall” atmosphere might sound like higher learning to the general public but would NOT work in keeping or increasing student achievement and would be disastrous in dealing with classroom management.

As I read this article and others like it concerning the financial situation and fiscal responsibility of our nation, more and more drastic measures and ideas have sprang up, and honestly I cannot blame any of them. There is no quick solution, and even the ones that clear up debt faster than others are still 5-10 year plans. Maybe we do need to double class sizes, cut staff, cut services, close schools to pay off debt. If it h as to be done it has to be done, just don’t expect student achievement gains, but rather expect severe student achievement drops, and all metrics go down. The bottom line is student’s education will suffer to pay off the debt. How much and in what way is up to the financial calculators and beaurocrats.

**“No Child change has bi-partisan support”**

Bi-partisanship is great, changing or amending the “No Child left Behind Act” would be a smart idea as a lot of things are not working. But, this is also an issue that politicians can use to further their political agenda without a thought going through their minds about students or education, but rather significant monetary gain through interest groups, lobbies, and publicity. The corporate takeover of education seems sadly imminent.

Republicans would like to see reduced government, therefore releasing education into the private sector, making a profit through testing centers, contracts; advertising, low wages for teachers and faculty, and making schools compete against one another instead of work together. I just don’t believe this is the correct model for the United States now or in the near future. I just don’t understand why it isn’t obvious the problems that many school districts face. The American dream where everyone has a decent chance to live a fruitful and successful life just seems further and further from the truth as time goes by for the majority of American citizens. We grow up in a feudal system in a democracy disguise. If you grow up in a high/middle class suburban neighborhood where your parents have inheritance and decent jobs, more likely than not you will fall in to this dynasty and be successful. The same goes if you grow up in the slums and low income areas. Socioeconomic factors in my opinion seem to play a huge role in education and no matter what you’re doing in school, the kids always go home when schools over. If you can’t change what’s happening at home in a significant and impactful way, you’re never going to see significant increases in neighborhood schools achievement.

President Obama’s broad statements make sense but I am not impressed because of the generality and past charter school directives. Where is the data on Charter schools in the United States and how amazing and innovative they are, changing the way of education for the students? Where are the strong achievement metrics of the charter schools in the ghettos? I have not found this data yet. I only hear about teacher accountability, teacher this, and teacher that, not about how the students are doing immensely better in school. If you want quality teachers to leave the profession and not attract any new ones then by all means increase class sizes, open up for profit schools and pay teachers low income. My problem is that when schools finally do go all profit, there won’t be going back after that, even if the system is far worse off.